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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT,
FRIDAY, JULY 30, 2004

THIS REPORT PRESENTS THE TURKISH PRESS SUMMARY UNDER THREE
THEMES:

HEADLINES
BRIEFING
EDITORIAL OPINION

MASS APPEAL

Turkey fully agrees with Iran against PKK - Sabah
Tehran acknowledges PKK as 'terrorist' - Milliyet
Iran to launch reciprocal official visits with 'TRNC' -
Milliyet
Saving Private Kerry - Aksam
Edwards calls on Americans to vote for 'hope' - Aksam
1,000 civilians killed in Iraq in a month - Vatan
Iraqi resisters kill Muslim captives - Hurriyet

OPINION MAKERS

Erdogan urges Tehran to open to the world - Zaman
Turkey, Iran natural gas bargaining to continue - Radikal
12 top retired US generals support Kerry - Cumhuriyet
PM allawi approves of Muslim peacekeepers for Iraq - Zaman
'Muslim Force' for Iraq - Cumhuriyet
Al-Qaida threatens to kill Berlusconi - Yeni Safak
Sharon changes mouth in the face of French reaction -
Radikal
Israel 'retouches' the route of security wall - Cumhuriyet
Sudan to release Tourabi - Yeni Safak

BRIEFING

PM Erdogan visits Tehran: PM Erdogan was received by the Iranian President Khatatami yesterday. Turks and Iranians signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) envisaging 'extensive' security cooperation between the two countries, papers report. Tehran has pledged 'effective struggle' against the PKK, and Turks recognized the Iranian opposition group People's Mujahedeen as a terrorist organization. The MOU also envisages signing a security agreement between the two countries for a joint battle against organized crime, narcotics and human trafficking. Turkish papers regard the agreement as a first significant step towards the prevention of human and narcotics smuggling into Turkey from Iran. However, the two sides failed to reach a compromise on the price of Iranian natural gas sold to Turkey. Erdogan's participation in the energy talks did not yield any positive result, and the two sides agreed to continue discussions at the technical level. With another agreement, Turkey's mobile phone operator 'Turkcell' became the second largest GSM operator in Iran. Iranians have also agreed to authorize the consortium led by Turkey's TAV company in the long-standing controversial issue of handling of the Imam Khomeini International Airport. At his meeting with Khatami, Erdogan urged Tehran to remove the 'barriers' isolating Iran from the world, say papers. When it becomes a full EU member, Turkey will become Iran's gate to the western world, Erdogan emphasized. Responding to a request by Erdogan, Iranian officials have pledged the exchange of official visits between Iran and Turkish Cyprus, say papers.

Parliament to discuss fast train crash: Turkey's parliament will debate last week's high-speed train crash that killed 39 people at a special session on August 4 after the opposition CHP called for a recall, the state Anatolian news agency said on Thursday. Parliament went into summer recess about two weeks ago, but the government came under heavy criticism for its handling of the crash occurred in northwest Turkey on a railway linking Istanbul and Ankara on July 22. The opposition CHP has 171 seats in the parliament, and a censure motion can only be opened to discussion with 184 votes. Erdogan said Thursday that his party would support CHP's call for opening a parliamentary debate on the issue. Erdogan had strongly rebuffed calls by CHP and the media to sack Transportation Minister Binali Yildirim, saying he would wait for an official investigation into the crash. Turkish dailies have accused senior transportation officials of ignoring experts' warnings that the creaking railway line would not support a 'fast' train.

Muslim Americans will 'reluctantly' support Kerry: "Zaman"

reports on an opinion poll conducted by the Council on American-Islam Relations (CAIR) in which 54 percent of the 1,100 respondents said they would vote for the Democratic Presidential candidate John Kerry. The CAIR research on the 2000 Presidential elections had shown that 70 percent of Muslims eligible to vote preferred Bush. Observers estimate about 1.2 million Muslim voters will vote, which is seen as a significant figure that might affect the outcome of Election 2004. "Zaman" complains that Democrats have not been paying enough attention to Muslim American voters. Kerry has recently changed his policies in favor of Sharon in an effort to secure the votes and financial support of Jewish Americans, "Zaman" claims.

EDITORIAL OPINION:

"Is Everything in Order in Iraq"

Hikmet Bila commented in the social democrat/intellectual Cumhuriyet (7/30): "The occupation forces are lost in Iraq. The troops are worried for their lives. The US Administration, which deployed those troops there is in a panic. Bush asks NATO to intervene in Iraq and Powell wants the Muslim countries' troops placed there. Bush is desperate prior to the Presidential elections. The US and its allies cannot establish stability there and cannot even protect themselves. They cannot establish the most important police and military force there, because the resistance does not allow it. Locals, who want to join the military or the police force, have been blown into pieces by the resistance. The occupiers cannot stop the assassination of government officials or the kidnapping of the foreigners in Iraq. With every passing day, the initiative passes from the occupiers to the resistance. Northern Iraq is still the region where the US maintains the most control. In full coordination with Barzani and Talabani (and of course, Turkey's contribution of 13 years), the US managed to establish an independent Kurdish State there. The only missing thing for this Kurdish State is international recognition. Stability cannot be established by praying or wishing. It is not possible for the US, which lost the initiative there and is defeated in the military and the administrative arenas, to establish stability in Iraq. Besides, could a partitioned Iraq with an independent Kurdish State in the north ever be a stable country? Is anyone, ever going to say 'If the US is going to partition Iraq (which what they are doing at the moment), if it is planting the seeds of partition of Turkey (which it is doing), what good is that stability?' As a matter of fact, there will be people saying, 'I would rather see Osama Bin-Laden next to the Turkish border than Bush, who is trying to spoil Turkey's 80-year-long unity and integrity.' Isn't the AKP government going to question this alliance, which also drags Turkey into its problems? When will they (AKP) discuss Turkey's relations with Iran, Iraq, Syria and the US? Isn't there any need for it? Is everything running smoothly?"

"Coordinating With Whom in Iraq?"

Erdal Guven opined in the liberal/intellectual Radikal (7/30): "Since the 1980s, there are two axes to Turkish-Iranian relations. One revolves around economic and commercial cooperation with countries in the region (neighbors) and the other revolves around political competition accompanied by a permanent, mutual security problem. Turkey's economic relations with Iran have declined since 1980 due to the US-applied sanctions on Iran. However, there was movement in the Turkish-Iranian relations after Turkey started buying natural gas from Iran in 2002. Of course, this change became more visible after the AKP government started applying a zero-problem policy with its neighbors. And, due to AKP's Islamic structure, this opening has been accepted by Iran with pleasure. Similar to its view of the occupation of Iraq, Iran considered the Turkey-Israel alliance a strategic threat. At the moment, it is observed that Ankara and Tehran have overlapping concerns and interests in Iraq. Could Turkey and Iran find common interests there? Should Turkey enter into an alliance with Iran and Syria? Isn't such an alliance against the US? Coordination against PKK! Let's not fool ourselves. Turkey beat the PKK despite Syria and Iran. Coordination regarding Iraq's integrity? Do you think Iran and Syria care about this issue? They view Iraq's possible change into a democratic and secular country as a security threat to the Iranian and Syrian regimes. And, of course, just the opposite is valid for Turkey. Turkey's interests in Iraq can only be attained by giving the necessary support to Iraq during the normalization process, not by establishing an alliance with the those working against the normalization. This is the only concrete solution to secure Iraq's integrity and to eliminate whatever is left from PKK. We should ask only one question: Would wrong policies will create wrong alliances?"